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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION  
Office of Marketing Services  
Marketing Reports Division

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Reserve

## THE CONTAINER SITUATION

The following statement on the container situation was compiled from material supplied by the various branches of the Office of Marketing Services and other agencies of the War Food Administration and the War Production Board. It is designed to help guide you in your area container information program.

A Quick Summary

Military requirements for containerboard are at the highest point they have ever been. This will make the going difficult for domestic users. Hence the need is greater than ever for the use of old containers during the balance of this quarter and probably throughout the third quarter. After the war is over there will still be a big demand for containers for export shipping. Fibreboard, used mainly for shipping processed foods, is in shorter supply than wood for boxes. There has been no change recently in the over-all picture on paperboard containers--inner containers. Glass is not easy to get but the supply is adequate. Tin is more restricted. Textile bags are used for various root vegetables because they are cheaper. Shortage of materials is complicated by shortage of manpower in forests and saw mills. Used containers are best used for truck shipments. Many are not in condition for railroad shipment or long hauls. Considerable re-use has been made of steel drums and steel barrels for shipping edible oils, shortening, lard and sirup.

Early Placement of Orders Necessary

Users of containers for all agricultural commodities should be advised to place their orders as early as possible. Heavy demand and tight transportation make for delay or even failure in filling orders. Suppliers, when they get orders sufficiently far in advance, probably will be able to fill most orders. Users of containers probably will be able to get enough for their needs if they get their orders in early enough.

With many good used containers on the market, users should try to obtain these where possible. Railroads have special rates on the return of used containers.

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## Fibreboard Supply Critical

Fibreboard is more critical today than ever before, and WPB warns that the situation may get worse. People with a rating of AA-3, AA-4 or AA-5 will probably have considerable trouble getting their fibreboard requirements during the second and third quarters of this year, and in certain sections manufacturers with an AA-3 or lower rating will find it almost impossible to obtain fibreboard shipping containers, according to a recent announcement.

In some areas the condition is better than others. Throughout the South the situation is much better than in the East and on the West Coast. Box manufacturers could put out 100 percent more boxes if they could get the board. Both corrugated and solid fibre boxes are being made. Under L-317 shippers may appeal for a supply of containers. Manufacturers should make every effort to obtain second-hand containers because of this critical situation.

Manufacturers of containers are also concerned over the manpower shortage. The paperboard industries operate with relatively few employees and the loss of even a few men is reflected in production. However, the principal drawback is the shortage of pulp. Re-use of fibre containers and salvaging of all unusable boxes will be necessary. Pulp-producing mills have been urged to increase their wood pulp production if possible, and all mills have been requested to take full advantage of the intensified waste paper salvage program since otherwise it will be impossible to meet second quarter programs.

Victory in Europe will not end the pulp and paper shortage although military and export requirements may decline somewhat. WPB has made an effort to insure that pulp and paper will be shipped from Sweden and other Scandinavian countries at the earliest possible moment. A daily freight-car shortage of between 18,000 and 20,000 and lack of suitable trucks and tires are hindering receipt of supplies and delivery of paper products by many paper mills, although facilities for shipments by water on the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes are adequate for the delivery of pulpwood from Canada. The over-all transportation problem will probably extend for a year after V-E Day.

## Wooden Boxes are "Tight"

Wooden boxes are tight. The Army has a higher priority rating than either WFA or the civilian trade, and its needs for containers receive first consideration. Other users must provide for their needs from the remainder. Production of lumber for wooden boxes and wood pulp for paperboard boxes has fallen behind not only because of shortage of manpower but because of conditions in the forests last winter when logging operations and transportation were held up because of weather conditions in some of the northern States, particularly Michigan and Minnesota. The freight embargo at Buffalo and Pittsburgh was also a hindrance.



## Fruit and Vegetable Containers

Growers and shippers worked hard for the past two years to provide themselves with an adequate supply of fruit and vegetable containers. The thought last fall that the war would end soon caused a let-down in efforts during the winter and spring. As a result fewer containers were salvaged this past winter.

The Fruit and Vegetable Branch made a survey and prepared a report in January 1945 warning growers and shippers that it would be necessary to stock up on containers early and take advantage of second-hand containers to eke out the supply, since there would not be a sufficient quantity of new packaging to take care of production this year if normal crops were produced. Shippers of some commodities are feeling the pinch now and are asking for assistance in obtaining containers for oncoming crops.

New containers, of course, are preferred. Usually, large shippers stock containers from 1 to 6 months in advance and established shippers are probably fairly well supplied. Shippers financially short or with poor credit ratings and newcomers to the field may not be so well provided for.

We are not so sure that fruit and vegetable container supplies are adequate but believe that in general the crop is pretty well provided for. Exceptions to this are early peaches and early tomatoes in some sections. The early peach crop is apparently a "record-breaker", and attempts are being made to obtain some baskets outside the regular supply territory. Some trouble is expected if the large crop develops as indicated.

Since many 1944 fruit and vegetable crops were of record size, total production will probably be smaller in 1945, but not enough to justify a change in container procurement practices. Normal production of spring and summer vegetables, peaches and apples could encounter difficulty unless definite and positive action is taken well in advance. There is still need for making the same adjustments and following the practices that have carried us successfully through the past two years.

## Egg Cases

Production of wooden egg cases will be about the same this year as last.

Production of fibre egg cases will be slightly less than last year, primarily because many users failed to order their cases in time to permit manufacturers to fill the orders. Fibre cases should be used as much as possible. New fibre cases can be used for rail transportation in refrigerator cars, and used fibre cases can be used for local shipments by truck.

AUG 14 '45

Under no circumstances should used fibre cases be burned. If no other use can be made of the, they should be turned in for salvage--thus to add to our supply of very scarce pulp.

#### Egg Cartons

Egg cartons are short, and wherever feasible re-use of these should be encouraged--but, when they can no longer be used for eggs, they, too, should be turned in for the waste paper salvage drive.

#### Milk Bottles

Every effort should be made to get maximum use of milk bottles to ease the effects of a short supply.

#### Containers for Meat Shipping

Tin, wood and fibreboard containers are all scarce for meat shipping. Corrugated fibreboard boxes are used mainly for domestic shipments. Specifications for fibreboard boxes have been changed in the past year. Now less wood pulp is used in making fibreboard, resulting in lighter weight for shipping canned and frozen meats for export purposes. Waste paper and wood pulp are used for manufacturing these fibreboard containers.

Used barrels and tierces are used for shipping cured pork in brine, and lard for export. Lend-Lease shipments are getting considerably smaller, but may continue for some months. On the other hand, for the time being, Army needs are tending to increase. Containers used for shipments for the Army or Lend-Lease are not returned to this country.

#### Restrictions on Food Processors

We are behind in the supply of wood and steel drums, tin containers, fibreboard cases and bags. WPB order M-81 eliminated cans for such items as non-seasonal soups made of dried peas or beans, clam chowder, chili con carne, cornbeef hash and baked beans, until September 30. Cans may be manufactured only for items mentioned in the order. Previous to this cans were made for foods which would sell readily because of being non-rationed, and no provision was made for other necessary items. The spring crop of spinach and asparagus is ready and will need cans of suitable sizes and finish. It is possible that some of the crop may be frozen and, in the case of asparagus, some may be cut up to be sold to hotels, institutions or other large users.

Packers who do not have adequate records showing a lawful use of fibre shipping containers in 1944 and 1945 may not accept delivery of new containers for use in packing products in Schedule III of WPB's Limitation Order L-317.